
ENVIRONMENTAL Fact Sheet



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Self-Inspection Checklist for Basement and Backyard Home Heating Oil Tanks

Each year in New Hampshire there are more than 150 oil spills from household on-premise-use heating oil tanks. Costs to clean up a spill can range from \$2,000 upward to several hundred thousand dollars, not to mention the disruption and inconvenience to you. Some spills occur due to overfilling the tank. Others occur because the tank was not properly located, installed, or maintained.

New heating oil tanks and heating systems should be installed in accordance with the requirements of the National Fire Protection Association's (NFPA) Code for the Installation of Oil Burning Equipment (NFPA 31) and New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (DES) best management practices (BMPs). But, what about maintenance? It is very easy to forget about your oil tank until it needs to be filled. Sometimes an oil tank, like other containers, can leak or play a role in an oil spill if it is not periodically checked and maintained. This is particularly true of oil tanks located outside.

DES recommends that you inspect your tank at least every three months. Below is a short checklist of items that you can easily observe to reduce the chance that oil will spill from your tank. If you answer "YES" to any of the following questions, you should call your oil dealer or burner technician. DES recommends that you only look and not touch when you inspect your tank. It is best to call a certified oil heat technician, and let someone who is trained correct the problem, and not attempt to do it yourself. In other words, let a professional do it.

SELF-INSPECTION CHECKLIST:

- Are the tank legs unstable or on a precarious foundation?
- Are there any signs of rust, weeps, wet spots, or excessive dents on the tank's surface?
- Are there any drips or signs of leakage around the filter or valves?
- Is the oil filter located outside where it is exposed to snow and ice, or to foot traffic?
- Do any oil lines between the tank and the furnace run either under concrete or underground without being encased in protective tubing?
- Is there danger of snow or ice falling on the tank?
- Is the tank vent clogged or restricted because of ice, snow, or insect nests? (Screened vents can be used to prevent insect nest problems.)
- Does the tank have a vent alarm? (State law requires one be installed in order to be eligible for state spill cleanup assistance.)
- Is the vent whistle silent when the tank is being filled? (Ask your delivery person.)
- Are there signs of spills around the fill pipe or the vent pipe?

- Is the fuel gauge cracked, stuck, or frozen...or are there signs of oil around it?
- Are you using more oil than normal?

Who do I call for more information? Contact your heating oil dealer, your burner technician, or the Oil Remediation and Compliance Bureau at the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services at 603- 271-3644.

Disclaimer: Information contained in this Fact Sheet is current as of January 1, 2005. Statutory or regulatory changes that may occur after that date may cause part or all of the information to become invalid. If there are any questions concerning the current status of information, please contact DES at (603) 271-3644.